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THE NEW GI BILL
ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

TRIP REPORT TO

THE

COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

100TH CONGRESS

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TRIP REPORT

FEBRUARY 12–13, 1987

THE NEW GI BILL—ITS IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

Congressman G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee, led a delegation on February 12–13, 1987, which visited basic training sites of each of the armed services. The purpose of the trip was to observe and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the new educational assistance programs for the All Volunteer Force established under Chapter 30, title 38, and Chapter 106, title 10, popularly known as the New GI Bill.

Mr. Montgomery was accompanied on the site visits by the following Members of Congress: Hon. Gerald Solomon, Ranking Minority Member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Hon. Wayne Dowdy, Hon. John Paul Hammerschmidt, Hon. Joseph Kennedy, Hon. Tom Ridge, Hon. Jim Jontz, Hon. John Rowland.

The delegation included the following representatives of national veterans' organizations: Mr. Cooper Holt, Executive Director, Veterans of Foreign Wars; Mr. Butch Joeckel, Executive Director, Disabled American Veterans; Mr. Gordon Mansfield, Associate Executive Director, Paralyzed Veterans of America; Mr. Morgan Ruph, National Executive Director, AMVETS; Mr. Michael Schlee, National Security Director, The American Legion; and Ms. Mary Stout, National Secretary, Vietnam Veterans of America.

The following representatives of military associations were also included on this trip: MG William Berkman, Military Executive, Reserve Forces Policy Board; Capt. Charles Buesener, Director of Legislation, Naval Reserve Association; Mr. Rudy Clark, Director of Military and Government Relations, Air Force Sergeants Association; MG David Gray, Executive Director, Air Force Association; Mr. Richard Johnson, Director of Legislative Affairs, Non-Commissioned Officers Association; VADM Thomas Kilcline, President, The Retired Officers Association; Mr. Robert Nolan, National Executive Secretary, Fleet Reserve Association; Chief Alan Obermiller, Executive Director, Enlisted Association of the National Guard; MG James Pennington, Vice President, National Association for Uniformed Services; COL James Rodenberg, Legislative Counsel, Reserve Officers Association; RADM William Sizemore, Executive Director, Navy League of the United States; COL Edward Smith, Director of Membership Services, Association of the U.S. Army; and LTG LaVern Weber, Executive Director, National Guard Association of the U.S.

Additionally, the delegation included the following House and Senate staff members: Mr. Mack Fleming, Chief Counsel and Staff Director, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Ms. Jill Cochran, Professional Staff Member, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Mr. Richard Shultz, Staff Assistant, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Mr. Kingston Smith, Minority Deputy Chief Counsel and Staff Director, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Mr. Darryl Kehrer, Professional Staff Member, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Ms. Karen Heath, Professional Staff Member, House Committee on Armed Services; and, Ms. Patty Watson, Professional Staff Member, Senate Committee on Armed Services.

The New GI Bill was enacted in October 1984 and implemented in July 1985. All indicators clearly show that the program is working extremely well, and it is fulfilling the purposes set out by Congress. First and foremost, the New GI Bill will assist in the readjustment of members of the Armed Forces to civilian life after their separation from military service. It will provide tens of thousands of young men and women assistance for education who otherwise might not be able to pursue postsecondary education or training.

In addition to easing the transition from military to civilian life, the New GI Bill is designed to attract and retain high quality personnel for the active and reserve components of the Armed Forces.

Participation rates in all branches of service confirm the New GI Bill's value to the young people volunteering to serve in our country's Armed Forces. Statistics show that during January, 1987, 80.9 percent of all new Army recruits chose to participate in the New GI Bill. The Navy enrolled 57.7 percent of its recruits; 45.9 percent of the Air Force enlistees opted for the program; and the Marine Corps reported that 73.2 percent of its recruits enrolled in the New GI Bill. As of January 31, 1987, 264,855 active duty service personnel had chosen to participate in the New GI Bill and more than 46,000 members of the Selected Reserve had applied to the Veterans Administration for education benefits under the program.

The delegation was familiar with these statistics but sought to observe first-hand the implementation of the program at each training base it visited. The delegation solicited comments and observations regarding the effectiveness of the program from all those involved with the New GI Bill including program administrators, commanders, recruiters, and recruits. The views of the personnel with whom the delegation met were straightforward and candid.

Army

The delegation first visited the US Army Armor Center, Fort Knox, Kentucky. The delegation was greeted by BG Paul Funk, Assistant Commandant. Over 48,000 recruits are trained annually at Fort Knox, with at least 10,000 in training at all times. This base is the largest single employer in Kentucky.

General Funk told the delegation that he has commanded troops in the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's and that the young people coming into the Army today are the best ever. According to General Funk, "The New GI Bill has made the Army a great place to soldier." General Funk later said he could not stress enough the importance

and impact of the quality of today's recruits. He said the Army is currently experiencing the lowest incidence of discipline problems in the history of the Army. In earlier years, according to General Funk, commanders spent 90 percent of their time on 10 percent of the recruits who were causing disturbances. With higher quality recruits, more time is spent on better training and other positive aspects of military service.

Following a welcome and introduction by the Battalion Executive Officer at the Reception Battalion, the delegation observed a New GI Bill briefing given to a group of approximately 70 recruits. This was the first and only briefing given these recruits regarding the New GI Bill. These young men were in their second day of processing and would make their decisions regarding participation in the program later that day.

The recruits were shown an excellent film which carefully explained the New GI Bill program and informed the recruits of the long-term benefits which result from additional postsecondary education. Following the film, a representative of the Army Education Center discussed the New GI Bill and recruits were given an opportunity to ask questions. Chairman Montgomery and other members of the delegation then questioned the recruits about their reasons for joining the Army and their sources of information regarding the New GI Bill. The recruits responded that their desire for education and experience had motivated them to enlist in the military and that they heard about the New GI Bill from their recruiters.

The Adjutant General of Kentucky, General Billy Wellman, shared with the delegation his views concerning the New GI Bill. He stated that this program is the most attractive and important benefit the military has to offer. He pointed out that there is increasingly a link between career advancement and education. As a result, more and more servicemembers intend to further their education. According to General Wellman, 128 educational institutions in Kentucky are participating in the New GI Bill, and many schools are assigning a specific staff member to work with students training under the program.

The delegation was particularly impressed with the following statement made by General Wellman, "You give a recruit a dollar today and it's gone. You give a recruit an education, and the recruit will have it the rest of his or her life. The New GI Bill is a number one priority because of what it offers long-range, to the servicemember, his family, and the service."

Next, the delegation met with a panel of recruiters to discuss the New GI Bill. The Army Reserve recruiter noted that 75 percent of his recruits are pursuing further education under the program. He said that most of the young people he talked to were familiar with the New GI Bill and wanted to participate in the program. This recruiter observed that the New GI Bill is reducing attrition, thus assisting recruiters and lowering training costs. The in-service recruiter praised the New GI Bill because the availability of the program has persuaded many young people to extend their commitments in order to go to school under the program.

Three members of the Army National Guard who are participating in the New GI Bill discussed their reasons for pursuing further

education. The first told the delegation that, although he was an officer, he did not have a college degree. He indicated that the benefits available under the New GI Bill would help him complete his undergraduate education and thus further his career. The next Guardsman told the panel that he had recently earned his GED and wanted to continue his schooling. The final Guard member to speak to the group said she had joined the Guard because of the New GI Bill. She felt she needed more education to advance in her field, and the New GI Bill would help her achieve this goal.

The delegation also discussed the New GI Bill with a group of recruits, half of whom were New GI Bill participants and half who had opted out of the program. Those recruits who were not participating in the New GI Bill gave the following reasons: 1) could not afford the reduction in basic pay because of family or other financial obligations; 2) had no interest in additional schooling; or 3) did not have enough information about the program. Recruits participating in the New GI Bill said they chose to enroll because: 1) it's a "good deal"; 2) definitely wanted to go to college and the New GI Bill assistance would help; and 3) additional education would help with career advancement.

A final comment made by the chief training officer at Fort Knox seemed to summarize the impact the New GI Bill is having on the Army and illustrated why support for making the program permanent is strong* The training officer tkld the delegation, "Today's skldiers are the best I've ever seen in the Army. As a trainer, my job is a lot easier." The 77 percent participation rate in the New GI Bill at Fort Knox during January, 1987, demonstrates the enthusiasm for the program at this base.

Air Force

The delegation's next stop was the Military Training Center at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, commanded by Major General Chris O. Divich. All Air Force basic training is conducted at this base.

The delegation first met with members of the 433 Military Airlift Wing (MAW), Air Force Reserve and the 149 Tactical Fighter Group (TFG), Texas Air National Guard. Included was a panel of Reservists and Guardsmen participating in the New GI Bill. Members of this panel indicated they heard about the program from a variety of sources including the media, recruiters, the base newsletter and unit career advisors. When asked if the New GI Bill had influenced his decision to join the Reserves, one panel member told the delegation, "If it weren't for the New GI Bill, I wouldn't be here."

A group of recruiters expressed strong support for the New GI Bill. An in-service recruiter said that without the New GI Bill, they would lose many of the high quality people they are now retaining. A recruiter for the 149 TFG observed that 76 percent of their reenlistments are now for six years. He added that the New GI Bill is the number one reenlistment incentive.

The commander of the Air Force Basic Military Training School (BMTS), Col. Roy Sheetz, told the delegation that polls show that 65-70 percent of Air Force recruits enlist in order to enhance their

education. Thirty-five percent join because they want a better way of life for themselves. The commander said that he is impressed with the young people joining the Air Force today. He characterized them as bright, eager young people who want to serve their country.

The delegation observed two excellent recruit briefings regarding the New GI Bill. The first briefing was given to a group of approximately 60 recruits in their second day of training. This briefing was very thorough and clearly explained the New GI Bill program as well as other educational assistance programs available to Air Force personnel. The recruits were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the New GI Bill and told that they would make their final decision regarding participation the following week. The recruits were encouraged to consult their parents or spouses and seriously consider this decision.

Of this group of recruits, 90 percent said they joined the Air Force in order to enhance their education. All of these young people had high school diplomas and approximately 15 percent had attended college but had not attained degrees. At least 80 percent of this group had heard about the New GI Bill before entering service. Their sources of information were recruiters, the media, pamphlets, friends and relatives.

The next briefing was given to a group of 45 recruits in their seventh day of training. This group had already received a preliminary briefing regarding the New GI Bill. Following another thorough explanation of the provisions of the New GI Bill and a question/answer period, these recruits were asked to indicate on the forms provided their decision regarding participation in the program. Fifty-eight percent of this group subsequently elected to participate in the New GI Bill.

The delegation next met with a group of 24 recruits. Half of this group had elected to participate in the New GI Bill and half had opted out of the program. The delegation was particularly interested in the comments of one recruit who was somewhat older than the other trainees. He said many of the younger servicemembers had asked his advice regarding New GI Bill participation and he had responded that " . . . they were nuts not to participate." He commented that the program was so good and useful to these young people that the Air Force should encourage recruit participation more vigorously.

When asked by the delegation why they were not participating in the New GI Bill, several in this group indicated that they were married and felt they could not afford the required monthly reduction in basic pay. Four of the non-participants indicated that, if given another opportunity, they would participate in the program. Another recruit said that he intended to make the Air Force a career and planned to use the Tuition Assistance program. Under this program, a servicemember who is attending school during off duty hours is reimbursed for 75 percent of his or her tuition and fees if approval is given by the base commander.

Those who were participating in the New GI Bill gave the following reasons for their participation: 1) firm plans for further education; 2) enjoyed school; and 3) entered the Air Force for educational assistance and experience.

The delegation was impressed with the implementation of the New GI Bill by the Air Force. Recruits were well briefed regarding the program, and their questions were carefully and thoroughly answered. The delegation was told that an effort is made to contact the parents of Air Force recruits regarding the benefits available under the New GI Bill. The delegation encourages this effort and strongly recommends it to the other branches of service. Parents will certainly appreciate the financial advantages of the New GI Bill and have a significant influence on recruits' decision regarding participation in the program.

The delegation also noted that the Tuition Assistance (TA) program was over-emphasized at Lackland. Tuition Assistance is a discretionary program and individual approval must be granted for participation. Funding for the program, and thus its availability, can be reduced or eliminated. Additionally, an individual on active duty attending classes part-time cannot complete an associate's degree during a typical three or four year enlistment. It should also be pointed out that participation in Tuition Assistance is generally on a "first come, first served" basis. Ideally, recruits should use Tuition Assistance, when available, while they are on active duty and utilize New GI Bill benefits to complete their education when they leave active service. This should be stressed to recruits.

Navy

During the second day of the two-day trip, the delegation traveled to the Naval Recruit Training Center at Orlando, Florida to review the Navy's implementation of the New GI Bill. The center is commanded by Rear Admiral John Koenig. The Naval Recruit Training Center at Orlando is one of three Navy basic training sites in the United States and is the only site that provides basic training to female recruits as well as male recruits.

At the outset of the visit, the delegation received a briefing on the center's mission and on the training requirements of the eight week recruit training program and the four week apprentice training program. Apprentice training is provided to all recruits who do not enter specialized training schools following recruit training.

The delegation received a briefing from the center's staff who are responsible for briefing recruits regarding the New GI Bill. The delegation was informed that currently 41 percent of male and female recruits are enrolling in the New GI Bill. The Recruit Training Center implemented a new procedure for its briefings on the New GI Bill effective February 1, 1987. Prior to that date, recruits received a single briefing on the New GI Bill on the third day of training and were required to make a decision regarding participation "on the spot." This procedure produced a very high percentage of disenrollments among recruits.

Under the new procedure, recruits are briefed on the New GI Bill on the third day of training and then are given another "refresher" briefing on the eighth day of training at which time the recruits make the decision regarding program participation. The delegation was told that the new approach should yield a higher participation rate because it allows recruits an opportunity to: 1) think about the decision over a period of days; 2) discuss the deci-

sion with fellow recruits in order to weigh the pros and cons; 3) use the eighth day briefing to ask additional questions; and 4) overall, make a more informed decision.

The delegation was advised that the reasons voiced by recruits for disenrolling from the New GI Bill are: 1) the perceived "loss" of $100 per month for the first 12 months; 2) the feeling that the New GI Bill is a "commitment" rather than an "investment"; 3) the non-refundability of the $1,200 basic pay reduction if the individual does not use the New GI Bill; and, 4) the immediacy of the recruit's decision requirement.

The delegation next received an informal briefing from officers in the Navy's Recruiting Command. The officials told the delegation that training and educational opportunities are most often cited by recruits as reasons to join the Navy. Recruiting officials feel the New GI Bill is one of the very best ways to recruit high quality young people.

During an informal discussion with Admiral Koenig and his staff, Navy officials made the following points: 1) the Navy needs the New GI Bill as a recruitment and retention tool to help offset the hardship of sea duty; and 2) there is no known evidence that the New GI Bill is a disincentive to retention. In fact, first term retention is now 65 percent—10 percent higher than it was four years ago.

The delegation was briefed by a representative from the Navy Reserve Center who made the following points: 1) 90 percent of reserve enlistees during the past year list the New GI Bill as their primary reason for enlistment; 2) many former active duty Navy personnel who did not participate in the Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) are now enlisting in the Navy Reserves for six years in order to qualify for the New GI Bill; and 3) the New GI Bill is the best recruitment tool the Navy Reserve has to offer and is the primary reason enlistments, reenlistments and extensions are increasing.

The delegation also observed a New GI Bill briefing given to a group of recruits in their third day of training. This briefing represents the first of two recruit briefings on the New GI Bill. In addition to information regarding the New GI Bill, the briefing included several other education programs including the Navy Tuition Assistance Program. The delegation was concerned that this comprehensive approach tended to: 1) dilute the New GI Bill portion of the briefing; 2) cause an "information overload" effect on recruits regarding the various education initiatives; and, 3) cause some recruits to think they do not need, or cannot use, New GI Bill benefits while on active duty because of the Navy Tuition Assistance program.

The delegation's next stop was with a discussion group consisting of 100 trainees who had completed recruit training. Fifty of the trainees were now in four weeks of apprentice training and 50 were in "A" school training. Those in "A" school had enlisted for six years and were guaranteed specialized schooling. Nineteen recruits in apprentice training had enrolled in the New GI Bill as had 24 of the "A" school recruits. Recruits in the apprentice training group cited the following reasons for New GI Bill participation: 1) entered the Navy without a specific guarantee of training other

than apprentice, so they desired the New GI Bill for additional educational opportunities; and 2) the $10,800 in New GI Bill benefits is a good return on the $1,200 investment required for participation. "A" school recruits cited the following reasons for enrolling in the New GI Bill: 1) entered the Navy in order to take advantage of the New GI Bill; and 2) "the New GI Bill is a good deal."

Marine Corps

The delegation's final stop was at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD), Parris Island, South Carolina, where they were met by Colonels Westphal and Douglas representing MG Harold G. Glasgow, Commanding General of the MCRD. The Parris Island facility is one of two Marine Corps Recruit Depots and the only site where female Marines undergo basic training.

The delegation was briefed by depot training officers regarding a recent survey of recruits. The purpose of the survey was to determine why recruits enroll or disenroll from the New GI Bill. One of the primary findings of the survey was that recruits felt it difficult to make an informed, irrevocable decision during the same class period in which they received, for the first time, the New GI Bill briefing. The survey found that recruits felt they needed more time to reflect on this important career decision. Therefore, the Marine Corps has changed its method of presentation for the New GI Bill at the Parris Island MCRD. Effective February 9, 1987, the Marine Corps is providing two briefings to recruits — first, an initial briefing on the New GI Bill, and second, another briefing several days later at which time the recruits make their decision regarding the New GI Bill. Under this new approach, recruits have an opportunity to think through their options prior to making a decision regarding participation in the New GI Bill.

The Marine Corps officials noted that in the month of January 1987, 63 percent of the male recruits and 80 percent of the female recruits at Parris Island opted for the New GI Bill. By contrast, during the period January through September 1986, participation for male and female recruits combined was only 53.9 percent. Training officers attribute this increase, in large part, to the articulated policy of Commanding General Harold G. Glasgow, that all Marine Corps recruiters are to insure that recruits are informed of the New GI Bill by their recruiter before arrival at Parris Island. This "early information" policy took effect in late October 1986, in swift response to concerns expressed by an earlier Congressional delegation led by Chairman Montgomery regarding Marine Corps implementation of the New GI Bill. The Marine Corps and the delegation believe this policy is starting to pay off.

The delegation then heard a brief report from line officers of Marine Corps Reserve units in Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia respectively. Both officers informed the delegation that participation in the Chapter 106 program by Marine Corps Reservists is increasing. At the Charleston unit, for example, in May 1985, 107 enlisted Marines and six officers were participating in the Chapter 106 program. In February 1987, 190 enlisted Marines and seven officers were participating in the Chapter 106 program. The delegation was told that 55 of the 90 Marines who are under

the age of 24 are enrolled in college. All 55 are going to school under the New GI Bill.

At the Savannah unit, similar increases were reported. Representatives of both units indicated that, because of high quality recruits enlisting for the New GI Bill, attendance at monthly drills has improved and there is an increased feeling of commitment.

In response to a question from the delegation regarding the administration of the Chapter 106 program, both officers stated that during the initial stages of the program, Veterans Administration application eligibility forms were not always readily available. In addition, the VA could have provided a greater degree of training and orientation to Marine Corps personnel regarding the specifics of the application process. They stressed, however, that the process was now functioning reasonably well.

The delegation also had an opportunity to observe the New GI Bill briefing given to a class of 112 recruits. The delegation noted that when recruits were asked if they had received information regarding the New GI Bill before they arrived at Parris Island, approximately 90 percent of them said they had been informed.

The delegation concluded their visit to Parris Island by speaking with separate groups of recruits who had opted for or against the New GI Bill. Recruits who opted for the New GI Bill cited the reasons as: (1) a good investment, (2) a financial opportunity that is unavailable through other state and federal aid programs, and (3) a good tool to be used in a potential return to civilian life following active duty service. Recruits who opted out of the New GI Bill cited the following reasons: (1) unavailability of a refund of the $1200 reduction in the servicemember's basic pay if the New GI Bill is not used, and (2) the $100 monthly reduction for 12 consecutive months is too much.

Conclusions

The delegation believes that the New GI Bill is accomplishing those purposes for which it was created. Recruits entering the Armed Forces have available to them an excellent educational assistance benefit which will facilitate their readjustment to civilian life following military service. The military services have a powerful, cost-effective tool which is aiding in the recruitment and retention of high-quality young people.

New GI Bill implementation, as observed by the delegation, is being carried out effectively by all services. Recruits are well informed about the provisions of the program and the benefits available to them under the New GI Bill. Recruits are encouraged to ask questions about the program and their questions are answered fully and clearly.

The delegation notes that most recruits indicated they had heard about the program prior to basic training, either from recruiters, the media, high school counselors, or family and friends. On a similar trip to training bases made last fall, that delegation emphasized the responsibility that recruiters in all services have to inform the young people they meet about the benefits available under the New GI Bill. Based on the number of recruits who indicated their recruiter had explained the New GI Bill to them, the delegation

concludes that: (1) the concerns expressed by the previous delegation were noted by the services, and (2) the services have taken positive action to remind recruiters of the importance and potential recruiting benefit of informing young people of the availability of the New GI Bill.

Those persons in positions of command at the bases stressed that the young people entering service today are bright, patriotic, and eager. They pointed out that the New GI Bill is clearly contributing to the high degree of recruiting success now enjoyed by the services. High school graduates in the upper mental categories are coming into active and reserve military service in record numbers. As a result, indiscipline and attrition are significantly reduced, and training time is spent more effectively. These factors contribute to increased military readiness at reduced cost.

The delegation emphasizes that, although the New GI Bill is an excellent readjustment benefit and a proven success as a recruitment and retention tool, it cannot stand alone as a solution to future recruitment and retention challenges. This educational assistance benefit must continue to be a part of an equitable and attractive package of sound military force management policy. None of the parts can singly enable the military to recruit and retain the necessary quality personnel, but together will enable the All-Volunteer Force to continue the strength and stability so evident today.

The following letters were received from members of the delegation regarding the New GI Bill and the highly qualified young people it is bringing into military service:

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

SELECT COMMITTEE ON NARCOTICS ABUSE AND CONTROL

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

To: Chairman Montgomery
From: Congressman Rowland
Date: 2/19/87

Report on Recent Tour

During our two-day tour, we saw both good aspects of the GI Bill implementation and bad aspects. There appeared to be different degrees of commitment to the G.I. Bill, presentation, style and substance. If I were to rate the presentation to the soldier in the various services, from good to bad, it would be Marines, Air Force, Army, Navy.

As expected, there were a number of recurrent themes and I would like to outline them in no particular order: 1) Longer time for decision; 2) Spread of the payment from $100 per month over a 12 period to $50 per month over a 24 month period; 3) Second chance to change one's mind; 4) Refundability; and 5) Transferability. I would like to present my personal response to these themes in order.

1) Longer time for decision

The key to this problem is in the recruitment stage. Recruiters must plant the "GI Bill seed," which can be followed up during basic training. I do not believe that expanding the time will make a considerable difference; however, the one-day decision time may not be as effective as a 3-7 day decision time with continued counseling, questioning and contact with the family.

2) Spreading the payment

I believe that this change is the most important one we can make. The GIs we interviewed who opted out cited two major reasons for their decision -- cost and non-interest in furthering their education. I feel that this change could have a tremendous impact on participation.

3) Second chance

Perhaps this category should be reserved for special cases; however, if the recruit knows he will have two bites of the apple, he will never make the initial decision. Having said that, I believe a follow-up opportunity within a short period of time could be beneficial. The key is that the recruit should not be informed of the second chance until after the initial decision making process, if possible.

4) Refundability

This notion sound good, but I believe that it's a bad idea. Incentive and commitment to furthering a recruit's education is imperative. Refunding $1,200 after a recruit gets out will serve as a great car downpayment. He may choose a car over a future education -- we must stress the 10-year period of time following discharge.

5) Transferability

Transferability would guarantee higher GI participation. The GI knows this is a good idea and although a GI may not want to further his own education, he would love an 8 to 1 return on his investment for his children or spouse. We must consider the future cost of this option and weigh it towards the whole program. Indeed, when asked about transferability, a very high percentage of non-participants would have participated.

A few other issues are worth raising:

1) We need a more uniform presentation; perhaps, we should implement the Marine plan, both for the instructors themselves (the briefing the Members received) as well as the outline used by the master sergeant. OUtstanding job by both!

2) "When in doubt, opt out!" That seemed to be a recurrent theme. Better planning with the recruiting process and "the Marine plan" will alleviate that. The service should always mail the information on the GI bill to the serviceman's home.

3) Another major concern was the presentation of T.A. benefits versus the G.I. bill. They must be separated as the Marine plan did very effectively. Many GI's felt that T.A. would take care of their education. Obvious problems exist with time, family commitment, and service-duty, especially the Navy.

In closing, let me say the future of America and the defense of our great nation has never been in better hands. We saw some dedicated, professional, and patriotic officers and GI's during our tour. It was extremely important to include our veterans and military associations in the tour. I commend the Chairman for that decision.

This year, we will make the G.I bill permanent, then we can continue to build upon and improve the plan, as well as the presentations. We saw evidence of this when the Marines followed-up on some recommendations made by the chairman during an earlier visit.

GI Bill Marine Results

Following the presentation by the Marines, I calculated the responses. Out of 80 recruits, 61 stayed in, 19 opted out. I analyzed the nineteen who opted out and there were only two recurrent themes: cost and a non-interest in furthering their education.

Comments from the nineteen who opted out were:

"I have a baby on the way and need the money."

"I am planning to be married in the next few months and need the money to start out."

"I can use T.A. to further my education adequately at this time."

Six GI's indicated that they are uncertain about furthering their education.

Five GI's indicated cost was a problem.

Three GI's indicated they needed more time.

Two GI's were concerned about the non-refundable feature.

These results were excellent considering 80 GI's were processed. My guess is that the Marine Plan will probably level off at 70%+ participation. We must also be aware that there is a certain percentage of GI's who would never participate because they have absolutely no interest in furthering their education. The only way they would sign-up is if it was free and automatic.

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DAVID L. GRAY
Executive Director

February 17, 1987

The Honorable G.V. Sonny Montgomery
Chairman, House Veterans Affairs Committee
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Mr. Chairman:

I enjoyed being a part of your team and appreciated the invitation to participate. On behalf of the members of the Air Force Association, I commend you for your concern for our servicemen and women and assure you of our continued support.

From what I saw and heard during our recent visit to the four bases involved, it is clear that the Army is extraordinarily dependent on the New GI Bill for recruiting. While useful, recuriting is not and should not be the primary purpose of the bill.

The New G.I. Bill is clearly a success that is growing in favor. A few minor changes might enhance its acceptability and success. These might include some or all of the following:

- More decision time is needed. Perhaps the last action before leaving basic training would be the point when the best decision could be made.

- While some additional numbers would opt for the Bill if refunds or transferability were offered, I believe both would reduce the incentive of the participant to go to school -- which is, and should remain, the primary purpose of the program.

- If monthly contributions were reduced to $50 or $60 per month over a longer period of time, it appears more would participate.

- If the decision to opt-in could be taken anytime during the first year of service (e.g., leave open the option during the first year of service and start the three years of obligated active service for full eligibility from date of sign-up), I believe more would participate. An enlistee does a lot of maturing in the first year of service.

In my view, it is important that the V.A. continue to fund and manage the program. If it goes to DoD, it may become a targeted recruiting program thereby changing the intent and purpose of the program. However, if the services wish to supplement the basic benefit with "kickers" to aid in recruiting, this should be allowed.

Sincerely,

David L. Gray

David L. Gray
Executive Director

THE
RETIRED
OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION
201 N. Washington St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2529 • (703) 549-2311

February 20, 1987

The Honorable G. V. Montgomery
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
United State House ofRepresentatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Sonny:

Congratulations and thank you. You have long been one of the great leaders of our country through your significant contributions to our military strength - both directly in your service and positively through your leadership in Congress. Your great support for the men and women in the regular and reserve forces has never been more obvious than in your New GI Bill.

Your initiative and thoughtfulness in including so many of us from the military and veterans associations on your recent trip will be most helpful for us and I hope for you. In response to your request for feedback, I've listed some observations and recommendations.

Observations

- The new recruits, though not aware of specifics, know that military service will help them get an education.
- Many (most, I think) of our new recruits are seriously looking for a college education.
- The more serious recruit is aware of the New GI Bill.
- As explained to recruits, the New GI Bill is attractive. Most want it.
- The Services are all supportive. They sell it as hard as they can without risking a backlash.
- The Army and Air Force Reserves seem to be almost 100% involved in the GI Bill program. There is no doubt that the New GI Bill is absolutely essential for continued high level enlistments in the reserve.
- There was no perception of opposition. Those not enrolled were not able to afford the $1200, did not feel they wanted that much or kind of education or felt they were close enough to a degree to be able to complete it while in service by using Tuition Aid.

- There were many (10%?) who were not able to afford the $100 a month reduction in pay who would seriously consider the program if payments were stretched out: $50 per month for 24 months.

- Many of those who had little previous knowledge of the New GI Bill (10-15%?) did not feel they could make the decision to commit $1200 without more thought, study or advice.

- Transferability is very attractive, especially to those considering a Service career.

- It was not surprising that many were concerned about the non-refundability of the $1,200 commitment.

- The recruits tended to show the personality of the Service they enlisted in. The response of the 70+ Marine Corps recruits that none had joined because of the GI Bill should not reflect against the program. They indicated their real interest. We must remember that they are Marines and that is why they joined - God Bless them.

- The nuclear power recruits in the Navy were also different. Almost all have some college. All have six year enlistments. Many are sure they can get their degree in that time - and they probably will. They, too, are different.

- The Air Force recruits are much more oriented toward an education (vice training) program. Their assignments are already known and they will have stability in tour lengths to afford them good opportunities for schooling.

- The Army has a fine program assisted by a very well funded recruiting program and clearly leads the way in enrollment. The New GI Bill would be worth it if used only by the Army.

Recommendations:

- Reduce the monthly contribution to $50 for a period of 24 months.

- Brief new recruits on the New GI Bill during the first few days and delay decision until training has been completed.

- Maintain the $1,200 payment as a good-faith commitment.

- Consider transferability in the near future. It would be a fine retention incentive. We will need innovative incentives in the years ahead if we hope to meet retention goals.

- Pass the New GI Bill as an entitlement.

Thanks for the opportunity to provide my reactions to the trip and my perceptions about this important program. Let me know if big help is needed and we will send out a legislative alert to have our chapters and councils mount grass roots support.

Sincerely,

T.J. KILCLINE
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)
President

TJK:bl

AMVETS
National Headquarters
4647 Forbes Boulevard, Lanham, Maryland 20706
(301) 459-9600

Morgan Raph
National
Executive Director

February 17, 1987

Honorable G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery
Chairman, Committee on Veterans Affairs
United States House of Representatives
Room 335, Canon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Sonny:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the recent fact-finding trip on the new GI Bill. The trip was enjoyable and enlightening.

Based on the visits with recruits at Fort Knox, KY; Lackland AFB, TX; Orland NTC, FL; and Parris Island MCRD, SC, I have the following observations/recommendations:

(1) Standardization to as great a degree as possible the initial briefing on the new GI Bill and elimination of other educational opportunities in that segment of instruction since there seems to exist some confusion between TA (tuition assistance) and GI Bill benefits;

(2) Allow more time for recruits to make the final decision, e.g., brief in the second week of training and allow for the decision to be made just prior to graduation;

(3) Decrease the monthly reduction in pay to $50 and spread over 24 months;

(4) Include transferability of benefits in the permanent legislation as initially proposed.

Or, a final option, give all service members GI Bill benefits of "X" amount of dollars and delete contribution requirement.

Again, thanks for allowing the veterans and service organizations to participate in this venture.

Please let me know if you have questions on the above.

Sincerely yours,

Morgan G. Raph
National Executive Director

MSR:ksc

cc: National Commander Joseph T. Piening
David Passamaneck, National Legislative Director

Reserve Officers Association of the United States

THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION REPRESENTING ALL MILITARY OFFICERS
ARMY ★ NAVY ★ AIR FORCE ★ MARINE CORPS ★ COAST GUARD ★ PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE ★ NOAA

24 February 1987

The Honorable G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Montgomery:

Enclosed is the report you requested following our visits to Ft. Knox, San Antonio, Orlando and Paris Island on 12 and 13 February. I hope you will find the comments helpful.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for arranging and sponsoring such an educational and enjoyable trip. I wondered prior to the visits what could be learned about the New GI Bill on a two-day trip to four locaitons. I obviously had a lot to learn! I gained a much better understanding and appreciation for the New BI Bill and its impact on the services and members. I cannot imagine how the two days could have been made more productive. Personally and on behalf of ROA, I want to thank you and responsible members of your staff.

Sincerely,

James C. Rodenberg

James C. Rodenberg
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF (Ret.)
Legislative Counsel

JCR:rkd

An ROA Report on New GI Bill Field Visits

The data, statements and observations gathered in visits to four service training sites strongly support the need to extend the New GI Bill. The visits provided a closer look at how the services are administering the educaitonal assistance program and the impact of the program on the services and those individuals for whom it is designed to assist. The Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery, is congratulated for sponsoring and arranging the visits; I cannot imagine how the two days could have been more productive.

All four of the observed service presentations were adequate or better; each had strengths and weaknesses. The Army's training film is lacking in personal interaction, but the Army should be commended for requiring that any recruit who initially opts out be recounseled. Overall, the Air Force presentation was considered the most professional. The Navy and Marine presentations were motivating. The requirement for the Marine recruits to complete DD Form 2366 immediately following the initial briefing seems unreasonable.

By every measurement, the Army is having the greatest success with the New GI Bill. The assistance program appears to be attracting a greater number of more highly qualified recruits into the Army, and the service has the greatest number of recruits opting to participate in the program. Each service has its own set of needs and priorities. It is especially significant that the New GI Bill is serving the Army so well. The Army has the greatest needs for manpower and, because of the nature of the service, confronts the greatest challenge to recruit qualified personnel. Much of the Army's success can be attributed to its use of "kickers" to supplement the assistance that is available under the New GI Bill. The Army's success best demonstrates how this educational assistance program can aid in recruiting well qualified active duty members and suggests a potential that is available to all the services.

In discussions with the recruits and their supervisors, there were many comments relating to how the New GI Bill can be improved. The suggestions can be summarized as follows:

- Recruits have insufficient time to make a decision.
- Some would opt into the program if given a second chance.
- Reducing the $100 per month withholding to $50 per month for 24 months would reduce financial burden.
- Provide "transferability" of benefit.
- Refund the $1200 withheld if not used.

While ROA totally supports continuing the assistance program unchanged now and would only consider ways of improving the program later, I feel compelled to address the comments relating to "improving" the benefits because they were voiced so often and discussed during the visit.

First, the complaint that recruits are forced to make the decision to opt in or out of the program with too little time and at a time when rational decisions are most difficult is perfectly valid. The decisions must be made early in the career of the recruit, before leaving basic training, but the program would be well served by allowing the recruit more time and less pressure to make a rational decision. I believe this should be changed administratively or legislatively as soon as possible.

I do not believe the program would be well served by giving recruits a second chance. More, if not most, would delay their decision--why would they make a difficult decision today if it could be delayed? In the end fewer might opt into the program. Once recruits start getting their paycheck, they will be less inclined to give up the $100 per month.

Reducing the $100 per month withholding to $50 per month for 24 months has merit and should be considered. It would increase attractiveness of the program without adding greatly to the cost. ROA would recommend that the recruits be given the option of a $100 per month for 12 months or $50 per month for 24 months.

A "transferable" benefit has some merit and should perhaps be considered in due time. It appeals to me personally, but it may not be cost effective. Consideration might be given to adding transferability as a bonus for additional years of service. A member might be required to serve a minimum of 10 years to earn a transferable entitlement. The benefit would thus contribute to increased retention, which would compensate for added cost.

Refunding the $1200 withheld in the event it is not used might add significantly to the cost of the program and have a negative effect without greatly increasing its attractiveness. I doubt that there is a great number to whom the benefit has appeal but who opt out because of a concern that they will not get a refund in the event the benefit is not used. I see this as an excuse, not a cause for opting out. The fact that there is no refund for an unused benefit is a strong incentive for the individual to use the assistance. Use-it-or-lose-it might be just enough incentive to motivate an individual to use the entitlement; the country as well as the individual thus benefits. If given the opportunity, too many individuals would take cash in hand and give up the less tangible educational opportunity.

The visits clearly demonstrated the very positive effect the New GI Bill is having on recruiting, retention and on the quality of recruits for the reserve component. Recognizing that Reserves are treated differently under the law, it is fair to conclude that

the reserve component benefits most from the program. Individuals testified that they joined the Guard or Reserve specifically to benefit from the GI Bill and are furthering their education while they serve their country. Their testimony indisputably supports the need for the program.

The information provided and the statements made during the visit demonstrate that the New GI Bill does not just assist service personnel or veterans in getting an education, but it is also a strong educational incentive. The evidence suggests that changes proposed by the administration can only negatively affect the success of the program. The benefits now available are not sufficient to cover all educational costs and reductions would only destroy the effectiveness of the program. The administration's proposals ignore the readjustment benefit and the benefit the nation derives from the educational opportunities provided.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the visits were well designed to observe the impact of the New GI Bill on the active and reserve components. The visits were not intended to evaluate how very effective the New GI Bill is in assisting individuals readjust when leaving the service or the program's positive impact on the nation's educaitonal level or the productiveness of participants. Though outside the purview of the visits, these areas are no less important.

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
2001 S St., NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20009-1125

(202) 332-2700

February 20, 1987

The Honorable G. V. Montgomery
Chairman
Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I want to thank you for the opportunity to accompany you, other members of the Veterans Affairs Committee and leaders in the military and veterans communities on the trip visiting our military basic training installations. This tour was very useful in determining the needs for the future of the New GI Bill and the means by which Vietnam Veterans of America can support your efforts in this matter.

Vietnam Veterans of America strongly supports HR 1085 to make permanent the New GI Bill educational assistance programs. The first resolution passed at the first National Convention of Vietnam Veterans of America in 1983 is "Be it resolved, that the Vietnam Veterans of America vow 'Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.'" This statement, from the Keynote address for the Convention by Congressman David Bonior, is our commitment to ensure that those who follow us in fulfilling their obligation of citizenship through military service are afforded the opportunity to regain their rightful place in relation to their peers who chose not to serve. The New GI Bill educational assistance programs are important means of fulfilling our obligation as a society to those who sacrifice themselves to protect our freedoms.

Education assistance to those who are willing to serve their country should come before any other program of education assistance to other Americans, be it grants or loans. It is, in fact, unfortunate that we are unable to provide this program to members of our armed forces without the need for their financial participation.

It is obvious that the readjustment benefits of the New GI Bill have become a major recruiting tool for the Armed Forces and it is indeed encouraging that many new recruits are opting to give up a substantial part of their first year's salary to participate in this program. We are concerned, however, that when the time comes for them to use this vital assistance the $300 monthly check will be completely inadequate to offset the rising cost of advanced education. It is apparent, as happened with the Vietnam era GI Bill, that these young people will be forced, if they have no other sources of income, to attend the least expensive institutions. We recommend the military

services in briefing recruits on the program include information on education costs. The Veterans Administration, as part of their educational assistance, must be prepared to provide information on additional sources of support for education.

We also encourage and support the provision of extra education benefits to those who opt to train in skills that are of critical need or are not easily transferable to the non-military work force.

There are a number of possible improvements in the program which are evident to me as a result of our recent visits. I stress these are improvements to encourage full participation and not necessary changes at this time. I assure you the program as it presently operates has the full support of Vietnam Veterans of America. These suggestions are elements of "fine-tuning" that we will also support.

The New GI Bill is a veterans readjustment program. In this time of needed deficit reduction it is understandable, yet lamentable, that we must ask those who sacrifice for us to also sacrifice financially for this program. But since they do sacrifice financially we must insure that these funds are not lost to their use if they do not use them for education. I recommend:

1. Those "opting in" the program during the first 14 days of active service be offered the option of $100 per month reductions in salary for 1 year or $50 per month reductions for 2 years. All others be allowed to "opt in" during the first year of active duty at $100 per month reduction. This will ensure that those whose obligation is for 2 years will have paid in their share before leaving active duty.

2. Anyone leaving active service before fulfilling their first enlistment obligation who is granted a general or higher discharge be reimbursed their full contribution upon discharge.

3. Those who do not use <u>any</u> benefits within five years of leaving active duty be allowed to be reclaim their full ($1,200) contribution.

4. Those who opted in and have served at least ten years on active duty and have used <u>no</u> GI Bill benefits be permitted to transfer those benefits at 1/2 their value to a spouse or child.

5. Military Academy and ROTC graduates be permitted to opt into the program having their pay reduced by $100 per month for 12 months if they commit to remain on active duty at least 2 years beyond their initial service obligation.

The New GI Bill for the Reserves and National Guard has one major flaw which may be detrimental to retention of highly skilled and educated individuals. The restriction of type of education and level should be lifted for Reserve and National Guard members.

Again, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be involved in this very important issue of readjustment for our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,

Mary R. Stout

Mary R. Stout
Secretary

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Mack Fleming, Staff Director and Chief Counsel
House Veterans' Affairs Committee

FROM: COOPER T. HOLT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
VFW WASHINGTON OFFICE

DATE: February 18, 1987

RE: G.I. Bill

1. The trip to various military installations was well planned and educational.

2. Comments regarding G.I. Bill:

   The G.I. Bill is extremely successful in recruitment and also in retention of volunteers into our armed forces.

   The G.I. Bill is without question the very best incentive the armed forces has in trying to maintain an adequate armed services with an all volunteer force.

3. Recommendations:

   (A) That the $1,200 contribution by servicemen and women be pro-rated over a 24 month period--from $1,200 per year to $1,200 over a 24 month period.

   (B) That complete reimbursement of $1,200 contribution by servicemen or women be considered for those who die after entering the educational program and that full reimbursement be considered for those discharged because of disability incurred while in service.

4. G.I. Bill be extended to spouse or children of servicemen and women participating in program.

   I have my doubts regarding this part of the program, but I do feel the members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee should conduct a full inquiry as to whether or not this proposal is feasible and is necessary for recruitment and retention of personnel for all volunteer armed forces.

5. I was extremely honored to be included in the group visiting various military installations for the purpose of reviewing G.I. Bill participation by new recruits.

   -- I found, as usual, OMB officials are at least ten years behind so far as military requirements are concerned. The G.I. Bill is an excellent example of their know-it-all attitudes without adequate research, such as visits to various military installations and talking with new recruits as to their interest in the program.

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★
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ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

2425 WILSON BOULEVARD, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22201-3385 (703) 841-4300

20 February 1987

Honorable G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for permitting me to join your distinguished delegation last week and visit the Service recruit training centers to learn first hand the reaction of recruits, their instructors, and their commanders regarding the New GI Bill.

As you requested, I am enclosing my impressions of that four-stop trip (Encl 1). I hope you and the members of your committee find them useful as you continue your efforts to make the GI Bill permanent.

Sincerely,

Edward P. Smith

EDWARD P. SMITH
Colonel, USA Retired
Director, Membership Services

1 Enclosure
a/s

SUBJECT: Impressions From Two-Day Visit to Service Recruit Training Centers, 12-13 Feb 87

1. The New GI Bill substantially increases the pool of potential Service applicants of high-quality young people.

2. The New GI Bill has resulted in a dramatic quality increase in both the Army's active and reserve components ranks.

3. The New GI Bill has had a dramatic positive effect on attrition, stabilizing the force, saving recruiting and training dollars.

4. While there will always be compelling reasons for some to disenroll, the Services must persist in their efforts to explain the GI Bill better before recruits arrive at the training center.

5. Flexibility in the contribution schedule, refundability (in certain cases, such as death) and transferability were principal areas for later reconsideration expressed by recruits and commanders alike.

6. The manner and timing afforded a recruit to disenroll varied with the Services. I personally support the present requirement to have the decision made within the first two weeks. In fact, if it is a "trauma" being pushed at recruits in the Center, when they want only to graduate, then it follows that the Army approach to have the recruiter cover it fully (even by taking a TV into the home for parent and guardian to see) before entering on active duty for training may be the soundest approach.

7. Recruiters -- for both the active and reserve components -- must play the leading role. Instructors at the training centers must be supportive, but are less likely to swing opinions at the late date they interface with recruits on this issue. Commanders must be knowledgeable about how this benefits their service members and their Service.

8. The Army needs the GI Bill, in its present form. Changes to modify it, reduce benefits, transfer funding of the basic benefit to DoD, etc. are likely to have an unhealthy effect on what we saw was a very beneficial program.

Respectfully,
Edward P. Smith
COL, USA Retired
Association of the
United States Army

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR UNIFORMED SERVICES
5535 HEMPSTEAD WAY
SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA 22151-4094
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February 20, 1987

The Honorable G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I very much appreciated being included in your fact-finding field trip to assess the impact and effectiveness of the New G.I. Bill.

The trip verified my past experience as the Adjutant General of the Army - that the G.I. Bill is the most effective and popular recruiting vehicle the services have. It attracts high-quality, intelligent young people, many of whom would not otherwise have considered serving in the military. In fact, the Army estimates it brings an additional 500,000 top quality young people into the recruiting eligibility pool.

As a result of our trip, I believe more strongly than ever that we must make the G.I. Bill permanent, that the Veterans' Administration should continue to administer it, and to fund the basic benefit as a readjustment program. The Defense Department can supplement with kickers as necessary to attract recruits with the needed skills and specialties. We must insure that DoD does not get control of the basic program since they would not only reduce the benefit amount but no doubt make it a bonus program solely for hard to recruit skills.

After you are successful in making the program permanent, I believe we should move on to improving the basic Bill. The trip convinced me that the individual payments of servicemen should be stretched out to $50 per month for 24 months rather than the present $100 per month for 12 months to ease the financial impact, especially on young married recruits. I also believe that the recruit should be given a second chance to stay in the program after he has had more time to think about it and discuss it with his parents and others. Perhaps a good time for this second chance would be near the end of basic recruit training. The transferability provision would

be a great inducement for senior NCOs to stay in the service and would help them fund a dependent's education. As you know, military personnel are hard pressed today in the high cost of education environment and normally cannot afford to pay the total cost of a college education for their children. This provision would be very appealing to senior NCOs, and especially those in the Navy.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of our members, I want to thank you for your dedication, courage, and skill in ensuring that the New G.I. Test Bill was established in the first place and for being the driving force behind making it permanent. Our nation and our Armed Forces desperately need this program.

We at NAUS will do all that we can to help make the G.I. Bill a permanent part of the VA program.

Sincerely,

J. C. PENNINGTON
Major General, USA (Ret)
Executive Vice President

JCP:mms

EANGUS
1 MASSACHUSETTS AVE. NW SUITE 101
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001

18 February 1987

Honorable G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery
2184 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

In response to your request I offer the following comments concerning our recent trip to visit Basic Training sites to observe briefings on the New GI Bill.

The trip afforded us who represent military associations a unique opportunity to revisit the atmosphere of stress, apprehension and disorientation from which all of us started many years ago. It brought back to us the basic ingredient of military life - the young man and woman who will be our strength in the future. It was an enlightening and gratifying experience. I was impressed by the obvious quality of the recruits in all branches of the services.

I could not have crafted a more effective manner to acquaint us with the New GI Bill program. Seeing it presented by the different services offered us the opportunity to evaluate the presentations; talking to the recipients of the briefings and hearing their explanations of their decisions on the New GI Bill gave us a better understanding of the perceived value associated with the program and the problems associated with the decision process.

I agree with you that we need to get out of Washington and into the field as often as possible to talk to the people that are effected by the programs we put in place. This trip gave me the opportunity I would not have had otherwise - to visit Basic Training bases. I most sincerely appreciate your thinking of EANGUS when the trip was put together.

The trip itself was beautifully planned and carried out. We could not have had a better experience. Please convey my thanks to all those who did so much to make us feel comfortable. I hope that, should such an opportunity present itself again in the future, you will consider EANGUS as a participant. I cannot thank you enough for including us on this one.

Sincerely,

Alan D. Obermiller, CMS (Ret)
Executive Director

NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES
2300 WILSON BOULEVARD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22201

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 19, 1987

The Honorable G. V. Montgomery
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Please accept my thanks for last week's well planned, well executed, and most beneficial tour of the armed services' recruit training facilities. It was an eye opener even for me, a 38-year veteran of the Navy, to observe the new recruits in their first days and weeks of military training.

I am convinced that the new GI bill should be permanent legislation. And, as a result of last week's tour, it is my opinion that additional service personnel would opt for the new GI bill if one or all of the following provisions were adopted in a future change to the law:

1. The decision point were delayed until the last week of recruit training.

2. The service member had the option of selecting whether it would be $100 per month for 12 months or $50 per month for 24 months that would be withheld from his pay.

3. The earned education benefit could be transferred to a dependent child or spouse at the option of the service member.

4. The withheld funds could be refunded to the service member should he or she later elect not to utilize the educational benefits.

Thanks again for including me on your superb trip. I do regret that the Navy was the least impressive of the four visits. It should be the best.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,

Gene Sizemore

William G. Sizemore
Rear Admiral, USN(Ret)

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION

Representing All Enlisted Personnel of the
U.S. NAVY ☆ U.S. MARINE CORPS ☆ U.S. COAST GUARD

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IMPRESSIONS FROM THE G.I. BILL FIELD TRIP

On 12-13 February, I was a member of a Congressional Field Trip to a recruit training center of each military service. The purpose of the field trip was to observe how the Services were conducting the G.I. Bill information program to inform new recruits of their G.I. Bill benefits and how to assure the benefits availability. We travelled to Fort Knox, Kentucky; Lackland AFB, Texas; Orlando, Florida; and Parris Island, South Carolina.

The impressions I gained:

FORT KNOX:

1. I have been impressed with the fact that the Army had a G.I. Bill participation rate in the low 70 percent. I now understand why. The Army gives only one lecture and then the recruits must decide immediately.
2. I felt the Army's presentation was very poor:
   a. How do the recruits relate to a civilian instructor?
   b. Instructor was poor, monotone, no motivation.
3. The film that was shown was of very poor quality. The microphone was not turned on for half the presentation.
4. It was obvious the recruits had advance knowledge of their G.I. Bill benefits (they said they received it from their recruiters and in high school); otherwise, how do you explain the average 77-78 percent participation rate?

LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE:

1. The instructor, S/SGT Brown, USAF, was far more articulate and professional and gave a very good briefing. A difference of night and day compared to the Army's briefing.

2. I have been aware for a few years that the U.S. Air Force's Tuition Aid program is very dominant in the pursuit of higher learning. Air Force puts more emphasis and resources to Tuition Aid then do the other three Services.

3. Therefore, I believe S/SGT Brown placed too much emphasis on Tuition Aid, and I feel he left the recruits with the impression, "If you don't take the G.I. Bill, you can get your degree using Tuition Aid."

4. S/SGT Michael Roehrig gave an excellent briefing to the second class of recruits (who were in their second week of training and at "decision" time). The recruits asked good questions.

ORLANDO, FLORIDA:

1. I feel we could have skipped Orlando (the Navy Training Command) and not missed a thing. It was obvious the Admiral did not know what we were there for and had made no preparations for our visit. Frankly, I was embarrassed by the Navy's performance!

2. The fact that we did not see the recruits in a progressive order, i.e., in their first G.I. Bill class, the second class and after decision time, makes my recollection of what we saw and heard at Orlando a jumble. The manner and conditions under which the recruits were observed and interviewed certainly did not add to our information. We saw more of the local press than we did the recruits.

PARRIS ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA:

1. We tend to razz the Marines because of their gung-ho attitude, but you have to give them credit as this was, without question, the best visit out of the four. The initial briefing by MAJ Sollis, USMC, was excellent, had meat in it and served the purpose. The fact the Marine Corps took corrective action in the G.I. Bill campaign proved to me they are serious.

2. They have increased their participation rate from 54 percent to:

   a. 65 percent for male recruits

   b. 80 percent for female recruits

3. M/SGT Boots, USMC, indoctrinated the recruits with good common sense logic they could relate to in stressing the value of higher learning and the key role

the G.I. Bill can play in obtaining the education. There was no doubt in my mind that the Marine Recruits had received the pros and cons of electing the G.I. Bill in a positive manner.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:

1. I believe the reasons non-participants gave for not electing the G.I. Bill were fairly consistent, and we saw no particular predominance of one reason over another by military Service.

2. The reasons given in their order of priority are:

   a. The $100 a month contribution for 12 months.

      (1) I feel care should be taken in the manner and way this requirement is explained. The average recruit sees this as a loss in pay and that is negative. After all, for Navy, it is the first full-time salary check they will receive.

      (2) If the $1,200 contribution was spread out over, say, two years at $50 a month, I believe it would encourage more recruits to participate.

   b. The second most given reason for non-participation was:

      (1) The short time given the recruits for a decision to participate.

      (2) Even among those who elected to participate felt that they did not really have enough time to consider the choice objectively. Several questioned, "Why were we rushed into the G.I. Bill?".

      (3) Very possibly, the other three Services could take the U.S. Marine Corps' lead and direct recruiters to indoctrinate recruits on the G.I. Bill more thoroughly.

      (4) Would requiring the recruits to make their G.I. Bill decision at the time of recruitment, even before they get to "boot" camp, be better? This could result with a lot of fraud complaints over G.I. Bill enrollments.

   c. No refund of the $1,200 contribution seemed to bother a few recruits. It is hard to argue against the common sense logic that it is their money. I suggest that we consider returning the $1,200, less interest, to them when they can no longer qualify to use their G.I. Bill.

d. The recruits felt that the "transferability" provision, where the unused G.I. Bill benefits could be passed on to a dependent, would make the law more equitable and increase enrollments in the program.

e. I believe the Committee should give careful consideration to any idea or provision that will enhance recruiting and retention of personnel, especially commissioned officers. Care should be taken to not appear to discriminate between those in regular service and those in Reserve programs.

Overall, I was truly impressed with the caliber of today's recruits, regardless of Service. I am proud that the vast majority of them are high school graduates and was amazed at the high percentage of those who had already earned some college credits and there were several who had degrees.

Sincerely in

Loyalty, Protection and Service,

Robert W. Nolan

ROBERT W. NOLAN
National Executive Secretary

RWN:mjk

JOSEPH P. KENNEDY II
8TH DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 19, 1987

The Honorable
G. V. Montgomery, Chairman
U. S. House of Representatives
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I'd like to thank you for arranging the field trip to review the implementation and effectiveness of the new GI Bill, and for including me in the delegation. It was an informative trip, and I came away with the general sense that the new bill offers a fine package of rewards and benefits to America's servicemen.

I did, however, jot down a few recommendations and observations on the journey. They deal both with general features of when and how the benefits are administered and with the differences in specific presentations we attended.

I wonder whether the program might be even more appealing to the servicemen if the monthly deduction were reduced from $100 over the first year to $50 per month over a two-year period. Young recruits signing on for the first time may be more eager to have the cash in hand from their paychecks than they are aware of the long-term advantages of intangibles like education.

I also wonder whether that $1,200 paid by each member of the service might receive a higher rate of return if the banks were offered the opportunity to bid for that investment.

In general, the presentations on the advantages of signing up for the GI program were handled well. However, I felt the seminar at the Orlando Navy Base failed to stress the advantages of participation in the program over the salary deductions and eligibility requirements. I thought the presentation given by the Marine Corps at Parris Island emphasized the advantages of participation. Perhaps that's one reason why enrollment in the program is high in that branch of the service.

If the GI Bill is to be a real mechanism to aid recruitment, why not allow veterans to pass education benefits on to their spouses or children if they don't intend to utilize the benefits for themselves? I also get the impression that with all the new and somewhat disorienting activities that a new recruit encounters in his early days of training, many young servicemen are not focused on something as far-off as higher education after he or she completes their service obligation. Offering those benefits during recruitment and at several appropriate times during a serviceman's early career might produce an even higher rate of participation.

Thank you again for arranging the tour, and for allowing me the opportunity to share my observations.

Sincerely,

Joseph P. Kennedy II
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

JPK:bk

NATIONAL CAPITAL OFFICE

NCOA NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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March 18, 1987

Honorable G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery, M.C.
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for asking me to accompany you on the recent trip to military training facilities to examine the effectiveness of the New G.I. Bill. It was a most informative and educational journey.

Foremost among the lessons learned is the extensive value of education benefits as a recruitment tool for the Armed Forces. Almost every individual interviewed by the delegation joined the service on the promise of achieving an educational or vocational objective. Certainly there was an evidence of patriotism and a desire to serve among the young people we spoke to, but it is the promise of education and training that cemented a decision to enlist. Thus it seems to me that it is imperative to continue the program.

Equally evident is an improvement in the quality of recruits now entering service. I was astounded to learn that only two of the Air Force recruits interviewed had not attended some college. Indeed, less than half a dozen of the more than 200 recruits we visited were not high school graduates. This alone is a substantial change in the quality of recruits which at one time numbered almost 40 percent non high school graduates.

Nevertheless, the recruits we visited were also quick to identify the deficits in the program. Of particular concern is the number of young people who could not participate because of financial commitments to family. The services accept a surprisingly high number of married recruits for active service. Unfortunately, recruit pay doesn't really go far enough to support a family and allow for participation in the New G.I. Bill -- at least not at the rate of $100 per month. Their plight made an eloquent argument for eliminating the pay forfeiture or at least spreading it over a longer period of time.

Finally, the disparity of presentations given to recruits seems to affect participation in the program. The more extensive education briefings seem to produce fewer participants than the more simple presentations. It seems recruits were easily confused by the education opportunities and alternatives available to them, particularly in trying to assimilate and make a reasoned decision during the first few hectic days of training. At Lackland, you may recall, each of the recruits who declined to participate in the New G.I. Bill said they perceived the Air Force in-service Tuition Assistance Program to be a no-cost alternative. They can only have reached this conclusion as a result of unreasonable expectations raised in their training. DoD should be encouraged to standardize G.I. Bill training, perhaps through the use of a film, to assure that only the general value of education and the New G.I. Bill are discussed. If this is done, I believe participation will rise significantly.

Thank you again for including me on the trip. I am honored to have been invited.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Johnson
Director of Legislation

RWJ/car